

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL

July 2006



The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

## KEEP THOSE CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSES

**CURRENT!** Persons in receipt of VA benefit payments who have those payments going to a financial institution by Direct Deposit sometimes fail to notify VA when their correspondence address changes.

Periodically, VA does mass mailings to all benefit recipients. Also, in some cases, verification forms to be completed and returned are sent. If a letter is returned as undeliverable, or the verification form is not returned, payments may be suspended or reduced until a current address is obtained or the completed form is received.

Therefore all VA beneficiaries should be sure to notify VA whenever they have a change of address. Doing a change of address with the Post Office or a VA Medical Facility will not update the address in the VA payment record.

The best way to notify VA of a new address is for the beneficiary to call the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.

## PURPLE HEART STAMP DAILY REMINDER OF VALOR

(VA News Release) WASHINGTON – In continuing recognition of the sacrifices of combat-wounded veterans, the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, joined with top officials from the U.S. Postal Service to unveil a new Purple Heart stamp. The new 39-cent postal stamp has the image of the military's Purple Heart medal.

Created by George Washington in 1782 for soldiers in the Continental Army, the Purple Heart now goes to military men and women wounded in combat. Next of kin of veterans who die in combat also receive the medal. In 2003, the U.S. Postal Service first issued a 37-cent stamp with the medal's distinctive image – a profile of George Washington on a purple background within a heart-shaped medallion. The new stamp has the same image, although it comes in the new 39-cent value set for first-class postage.

## VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION PRE-REGISTRATION PROGRAM

The purpose of the Pre-registration Program is to contact veterans to identify and

record any changes to a veteran's demographic and insurance information prior to a scheduled outpatient visit or procedure. It is VA policy that all VA medical centers must use the Pre-registration Program and all associated processes, procedures, and designated reports as tools to identify veterans who have not updated demographics and insurance information within the (at most) 180 days preceding their scheduled appointments.

The original contractor for VA, Risk Management Association (RMA), was bought out by the NCO Group. This is a legitimate program. NCO representatives will be contacting patients who have upcoming appointments to identify and record any changes to their demographic and insurance information prior to a scheduled outpatient visit or procedure.

Pre-registration updates the following information: veteran's complete address, home and work telephone numbers, insurance information, next of kin, emergency contact, and employer information. Pre-registration is normally associated with, but is not limited to calling the veteran at the veteran's residence, where information may be more readily available, in advance of scheduled appointments at the VA facility; or mailing the veteran a VA Form 10-10EZR, Health Benefits Renewal Form, for completion at the veteran's home where family members may assist in gathering information. The veteran needs to return the completed form to the facility, where Pre-registration personnel will input any changes. *If the patient would prefer not to update information over the telephone, updating patient information on the same day of the appointment through a face-to-face interview is acceptable.* Patients are not required to supply this information but are encouraged to do so as this process will help decrease rework, delays and frustrations to the patients and employees, prevent the return of undeliverable mail (prescriptions, appointment letters, etc), and remind patients of their upcoming appointment.

Again, this is a valid VA program and it is designed to more efficiently and effectively meet our veterans' healthcare needs.

**VA ADDS MAPS TO ONLINE GRAVESITE LOCATOR** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The grave locations of more than three million veterans and dependents buried in national cemeteries can be found more easily now because the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has added maps of burial sections online that can be printed from home computers and at national cemetery kiosks. The latest improvement builds upon a service begun two years ago, in which a VA online feature permits family members to find the cemetery in which their loved one is buried.

The gravesite locator (<http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>), online since April 2004, helps veterans' families, former comrades-in-arms and others find the cemeteries where veterans are buried. With the new online feature, people enter a veteran's name to search, click on the "Buried At" (burial location) link and a map of the national cemetery is displayed, showing the section where the grave is located.

In a related development, VA recently added to its database the cemeteries in which 1.9 million veterans were buried with VA grave markers. These are mostly private cemeteries. This addition brings the number of graves recorded in the locator to approximately five million. Those with maps are in VA national cemeteries and in state veterans cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery if burials were since 1999.

Beyond the five million records now available, VA continues to add approximately 1,000 new records to the database each day. VA also plans to add to its online database the exact locations of veterans' gravesites in the remaining state veterans cemeteries.

#### **NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES**

**HEADING TO ALASKA** (VA News Release June 6, 2006) WASHINGTON – More than 500 veterans with disabilities will compete in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, being held July 3 - 8 in Anchorage, Alaska. The Wheelchair Games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The Alaska VA Healthcare System and the Northwest Chapter of PVA are hosting the 2006 games.

For many injured veterans, the Wheelchair Games provide the first exposure to wheelchair athletics. For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, or to follow event results as they happen, visit the Games Web site at: <http://www.wheelchairgames.org>

#### **IMPORTANT DATES IN JULY**

**July 4** Federal holiday - Independence Day

**July 10** last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2006 payments

**July 21** last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 08-01-2006 payments

#### **VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 **1-800-827-1000**

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 **1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)**

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications **1-877-823-2378**

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - **1-877-222-8387**

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) **1-877-838-2778**

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 **1-800-669-8477**

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -

CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024  
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 **1-800-733-8387**

**Foreign Medical Program Office** (medical treatment abroad) -  
PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 **303-331-7590**

#### **National Cemeteries**

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL **727-398-9426**  
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 **352-793-7740**  
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL **850-453-4108/4846**

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC 20420 **1-800-697-6947**

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 **1-888-244-6711**

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit** - Chicago VA Regional Office **1-800-829-4833**

#### **INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:**

VA Web Site: **[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)**

VA Forms: **[www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms)**

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) **[www.warms.vba.va.gov](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov)**

Property Management (sale of VA-repossessioned homes): **[www.ocwen.com](http://www.ocwen.com)**

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: **[www.floridavets.org](http://www.floridavets.org)**

St. Pete Regional Office: **[www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)**